

## University of Rochester – Credit-Hour Policy and Compliance

All University of Rochester degree and certificate programs are approved by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). The University of Rochester's credit-hour calculations for degree and certificate programs follow NYSED guidelines, which are based on the U.S. Department of Education's definition of *credit hour*.

The faculty in each school is responsible for all aspects of the curriculum and degree program requirements. Each school has a faculty curriculum committee that reviews proposed new and revised courses and degree programs, including the credit hours associated with each.

See below for further details regarding University of Rochester Policies for Credit Hours for Online Teaching and the Simon Business School.

### **NYSED – Credit Hour Definition**

All courses and degree programs at the University must comply with Section 50.1 (o) of the New York State Commissioner of Education Regulations:

*Semester hour* means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2(c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.

Source: NYSED Commissioner's Regulations Concerning Program Registration: 50.1 Definitions  
<https://govt.westlaw.com/nycrr/Document/Ieca5c8abc22111dd97adcd755bda2840?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=%28sc.Default%29>

### **United States Department of Education – Credit Hour Definition**

The U.S. Department of Education defines *credit hour* as: An amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

1. one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or,
2. at least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

### **Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education expects all candidate and accredited institutions to demonstrate that they use acceptable and consistent methods for assigning credit hours to all courses and programs of study. The credit hour is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as a basic institutional measure of the level of instruction and academic rigor that establishes eligibility for federal funding.

Source: MSCHE Credit Hour Policy Effective August 23, 2012 Rev. October 30, 2012

<http://www.msche.org/documents/CreditHourPolicyRev112012.pdf>

**See pages below for University of Rochester Credit-Hour Policies**

**Online Teaching and Learning Credit Hours** (*updated March 2019*)

The University of Rochester is committed to making each online course equivalent to its face-to-face counterpart, which includes offering the same minimum level of instructional time and supplemental assignments as required by the New York State Education Department for each credit (i.e., at least 15 hours of 50 minutes each of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments). However, in an online course instructional time may take different forms, including but not limited to, a combination of online synchronous class sessions, recorded lectures and narrated PowerPoint presentations, instructor-facilitated asynchronous discussion boards, instructor-facilitated asynchronous audio/video interaction, instructor-facilitated long-term projects, and one-on-one video communications with the instructors.

**College Credit-Hour Policy** (*Updated Oct. 2018*)

This policy documents the College's adherence to federal, state and university guidelines for the application of credit hours to undergraduate and graduate courses. It explains the history of the credit-hour system within the College (and its precursors) and the current break-down of in-class contact hours and out-of-classroom work associated with various types of courses.

**History of the College Course System and Credit Hours:**

The credit-hour policy for the College has been guided by basic principles established over 50 years ago. The Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences approved the transition to a four-course system from the previous five-course system in January 1961, with final guidelines on the new system distributed later that year. The rationale for the system was that fewer courses per semester allowed students to develop a deeper understanding of course material, including working independently to increase their knowledge in these topics. The Faculty approved the following statement outlining the approved approach for allocating credit hours to courses.

“The ordinary unit of undergraduate instruction in the College is the course, which is defined as consisting of a coherent body of academic material requiring approximately 25% of the working time of the student during one term. Lecture and discussion courses normally meet for three fifty-minute or two seventy-five minute periods each week with the equivalent of a fourth period being made up of enriched independent study, lecture, or discussion. Laboratory courses ordinarily involve four fifty-minute class periods or their equivalent in laboratory sessions each week. For purposes of recording, computing grade averages, and reporting to the State Education Department, each course shall normally be assigned four hours of credit. This definition shall ordinarily apply to all courses in the College numbered between 100 and 399” (January 20, 1961, emphasis added).

In 1968, the New York State Education Department formally registered all majors within the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering and Applied Science under this new system. As such, the College expected students to enroll in four, four-credit classes, or 16 credits total, per semester.

Course credit has evolved in the intervening period due to changes in the curriculum and the need for specialized courses. The standard course remains four credit hours, but the College has also introduced one- and two-credit courses in a variety of disciplines. These latter courses typically focus on applied skills (music, dance, student leadership opportunities) or relate to technical laboratory or workshop activities (CAD, micro-electric devices). In recent years, five- and six-credit courses have been also added to the curriculum in certain disciplines (chemistry, modern and classical languages). The increased credit hours for these courses reflect the additional student effort (inside and outside class) necessary for students to master this material.

### College Credit-Hour Policy (continued)

#### **Current Policy:**

The College continues to operate on a four-credit per course system as outlined above, with credit hours allocated based on the University credit hour policy. The University credit-hour policy follows United States Department of Education and New York State Education Department policies regarding credit hours (see Appendix B). These policies delineate the number of contacts hours and supplementary work required per credit hour.

Combined, these policies mandate that each credit hour consists of one hour of faculty-led instruction and two hours of out-of-class supplementary work per week throughout the semester. In the case of a two-credit course, for example, the course would have two hours of faculty-led instruction and four hours of supplementary work (readings, assignments, projects) every week, for six hours total each week. A four-credit course would double these amounts, with four hours of faculty-instruction and eight hours of supplementary work, for eight hours total. (Note that an “hour” of classroom-based instruction is defined as 50 minutes to allow for transit time between classes.)

In addition, these policies allow for “equivalent” academic activities to replace faculty-led instructional time. An equivalent academic activity can include formally defined activities such as recitations, studios and laboratory sessions; however, it may also include additional independent academic work completed outside of class in less structured settings. In this case, the faculty-led instructional time, equivalent instructional time and supplementary work must equal the hours per week associated with the course credit hours.

Supplementary student work refers to standard “homework” activities for students, which might include reading assignment, papers or essays, problem sets, group-work assignments, etc. Courses within the College utilize a combination of faculty-led instruction, equivalent academic activities, and supplementary student work to meet the credit hour policy. The chart below outlines the typical distribution instructional and supplementary work for courses by credit hour.

Course Credit Hours	Faculty-led instructional time per week*	Equivalent activities time per week	Type of Activity	Supplementary Student Work per week	Average Total Course Work per week
One Credit	50 minutes	---	---	120 minutes	170 minutes
Two Credit	100 minutes	---	---	240 minutes	340 minutes
Four Credit	150 minutes	50 minutes	Recitation or out-of-class independent activities (see below)	480 minutes	680 minutes
Four Credit	150 minutes	50 minutes <sup>#</sup>	Lab; Lab/Lecture; Workshop	480 minutes <sup>#</sup>	680 minutes
Five Credit	150 minutes	100 minutes <sup>#</sup>	Lab; Lab/Lecture; Workshop	600 minutes <sup>#</sup>	850 minutes
Six Credit	300 minutes	---	---	720 minutes	1020 minutes

\* For most courses, this will consist of a series of lectures provided in the classroom. These are based on a 50-minute “hour” as defined in the credit-hour policy.

<sup>#</sup> For laboratory-based courses, equivalent activities and out-of-class student work will be met in part through instructional time and/or independent work in the lab.

**Simon Business School's Policy for Credit Hours for Graduate Study (effective July 1, 2019)**

- Most Simon graduate-level courses follow a calendar based on two 7-week “mini-semester” terms per semester. To maintain compatibility with the semester calendar followed by most units at the University of Rochester, Simon uses semester-based credit hours to denominate credit hours for its courses.
- The typical course offered in Simon’s MS and MBA (full-time, part-time, and executive) programs bears 2.5 credit hours. Based on the above definitions of a credit hour, such courses require 37.5 instructional hours of 50 minutes each (i.e., 31.25 actual hours of 60 minutes). Instructional hours consist of instructor-led lectures, instructor-created videos, and “equivalent academic activities” that can include required recitations, “lab” sessions, and independent academic work completed outside of class.
- In addition to these instructional hours, a course worth 2.5 credit hours also requires 75 hours (of 50 minutes each hour) of supplementary student work outside of class (i.e., two hours per instructional hour). Supplementary work refers to standard “homework” activities for students, which might include reading assignments, papers or essays, problem sets, group-work assignments, etc.
- The sum of instructional hours and supplemental work outside of class for a course bearing 2.5 credit hours must be at least 112.5 hours of 50 minutes (i.e., 93.75 actual hours).
- The total of 93.75 hours per 2.5-credit course is achieved differently for daytime, evening, and weekend classes. Daytime classes meet for 2 hours 10 minutes twice per week for 7 weeks, totaling 30.33 hours. Evening classes meet for 3 hours 50 minutes once per week for 7 weeks, totaling 26.83 hours. Weekend classes meet between 18 to 22 hours per course, supplemented with instructor videos bringing total instructor-led instruction to at least 24 hours. Accordingly, to attain 31.25 instructional hours, equivalent academic activities per course are approximately 1 hour for daytime courses, 4.5 hours for evening courses, and 7.25 hours for weekend courses. For all courses, supplementary student work outside of class totals 62.5 hours over the term.
- PhD classes entail more equivalent academic activities and are accordingly 3 credit hours as opposed to 2.5 for non-PhD classes. Most Simon PhD classes meet for 2 hours 10 minutes twice per week for 7 weeks.
- Some classes with projects require more weeks for students to complete the projects and are therefore offered on a full-semester basis. These “semester” classes meet for 2.5 hours per week for 14 weeks and augment the 35 hours of instructor-led instruction with 15 hours of equivalent academic activities.
- A couple of Simon graduate courses are worth only 1 credit hour and accordingly meet less as reported in the table below.
- Undergraduate courses offered by Simon Business School adhere to the *College Credit-Hour Policy* specified above.

**Credit-Hour Calculations for Graduate Courses at Simon Business School**

Class Type	Semester Credit Hours	Instructor-led Instruction hours per course	Equivalent Academic Activity hours per course	Total Instructional Hours (sum of columns 3 & 4; 12.5 hours per credit)	Supplemental student work hours per course (25 hours per credit)	Total Effective Hours (50 minutes per effective hour; 45 effective hours per credit)
daytime	2.5	30.33	0.92	31.25	62.5	112.5
evening	2.5	26.83	4.42	31.25	62.5	112.5
weekend	2.5	24	7.25	31.25	62.5	112.5
semester	4	35	15	50	100	180
1-credit	1	11.5	1	12.5	25	45
PhD	3	30.33	7.17	37.5	75	135

*Credit-Hour Policy on Course Syllabi:*

All Simon course syllabi should state how the course meets the total instructional hours specified in the Simon credit-hour policy through the scheduled course sessions with the instructor (e.g. lectures, discussions) and equivalent academic activities.